

Sean Griffin

From: Harold Cook <hc@haroldcook.com>
Sent: Tuesday, January 25, 2011 3:20 PM
To: Amber Hausenfluck; Steve Scheibal; Ray Martinez; Debra Gonzales; David Edmonson; Will Krueger; Jason Hassay; Dan Buda; Graham Keever; Micah Rodriguez; Graham Keever_SC; Sara Gonzalez; Lara Wendler; Gonzalo Serrano; Oscar Garza; Sushma Smith
Subject: Retired nuns barred from voting in Indiana because of voter ID

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2008/may/07/uselections2008.usa>

Retired nuns barred from voting in Indiana

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- Article history

At least 10 retired nuns in South Bend, Indiana, were barred from voting in today's Indiana Democratic primary election because they lacked photo IDs required under a state law that the supreme court upheld last week.

John Borkowski, a South Bend lawyer volunteering as an election watchdog for the Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, said several of the retired nuns had been voting all of their lives but were told they lacked the required identification cards and could only file provisional ballots.

Since 2005, Indiana's toughest-in-the-nation law requires every voter to produce a state or federal photo ID card. The supreme court, after weighing scores of legal briefs from conservatives who backed the statute and liberals who opposed it, upheld the law by a 6-3 vote, saying there was little evidence that it was unduly burdensome for voters.

Borkowski said Sister Julie McGuire, one of several nuns on poll duty, wasn't pleased to turn away the nuns, some of whom were in their 80s and 90s and no longer had driver's licenses.

"Here's the supreme irony," Borkowski said. "This law was passed supposedly to prevent and deter voter fraud, even though there was no real record of serious voter fraud in Indiana. Here you have a bunch of nuns whose votes can't be accepted by a bunch of nuns ... who live with them in the polling place in their convent because they don't have an ID."

At least six other people also were relegated to filing provisional ballots at the polling place on the ground floor of the Congregation of the Sisters of the Holy Cross, said Amy Smessaert, a spokeswoman for the convent.

Among them was Lauren McCallick, an 18-year-old freshman at St Mary's College in South Bend, who said she got "teary-eyed" and then angry at being rejected the first time she was old enough to vote.

"The nuns and this young woman are the face of the supreme court case," said Jonah Goldman, who directs the Lawyers Committee's Campaign for Fair Elections. He said his group, which has bird-dogged polling places in primaries across the country over the past three months, also has found widespread confusion in other states over voter identification requirements.

"We've seen people in every contest that we've covered being disenfranchised by a perceived, incorrect or illegal restrictive identification requirement," partly because some poll workers have demanded more identification than was required by law, Goldman said.

Indiana secretary of state Todd Rokita, who's charged with overseeing the new law, issued a statement today that didn't directly mention the nuns.

"The Indiana voter ID law applies to everyone," Rokita said. He said a "safety net" allows voters ages 65 and older to vote by absentee ballot and that those limited to filing provisional ballots have 10 days to "show their proper photo ID".

Borkowski said that two of the nuns with whom he spoke were very frustrated and so upset that they refused to cast provisional ballots. He said one of the nuns told him that many others among the 137 retired sisters living at the Congregation of the Sisters of the Holy Cross convent were dissuaded from voting upon learning that several had been turned away.

McCallick, the student, said she was forced to cast a provisional ballot because she could produce only a California driver's license and a college identification card.

"I was really upset," she said. "I went to see [Democratic presidential candidate Barack] Obama when he visited a high school near South Bend. My roommate and I waited in line to see him. I was just excited about the whole process."

Under the Indiana law, McCallick has 10 days to show up at the county clerk's office with proper identification, but she's due to leave town in three days.

When a poll worker told her she lacked the right identification, McCallick said: "I thought she was joking."

A native of Placentia, California, McCallick said she had a final examination in her political science class later in the day.

"I was thinking about writing an entire essay about this," she said. "Part of my essay is supposed to be about the supreme court."